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FINANCING OF THE UNITED NATIONS OBSERVER MISSION IN EL SALVADOR

Report of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions

1. The Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions has considered the report of the Secretary-General on the financing of the United Nations Observer Mission in El Salvador (ONUSAL) (A/45/242/Add.1). During its consideration of the item, representatives of the Secretary-General provided additional information to the Advisory Committee.

2. ONUSAL was established by Security Council resolution 693 (1991) of 20 May 1991, which approved the report of the Secretary-General (S/22494 and Corr.1 and Add.1) of 16 April 1991 and decided that the Mission should be established for an initial period of 12 months. With regard to the method of financing of ONUSAL, the Secretary-General recalls in paragraph 3 of his report, his recommendation to the General Assembly "that the cost of ONUSAL be considered an expense of the Organization to be borne by Member States in accordance with Article 17, paragraph 2, of the Charter of the United Nations and that the assessments to be levied on Member States be credited to a special account that would be established for this purpose".

3. As indicated in section II of the report, the Secretary-General entered into commitments not exceeding $611,300, under the authority granted to him in paragraph 1 (a) of General Assembly resolution 44/203 of 21 December 1989 relating to unforeseen and extraordinary expenses, to establish a small preparatory office in El Salvador for the period from 1 January to 30 June 1991. The initial costs of the preparatory office are incorporated in the cost estimates of ONUSAL.

4. According to section III of the report, the Secretary-General estimates that the cost of the ONUSAL operation for a period of 12 months would amount to $31,177,700 (gross) ($28,782,800 net), at full cost. The Committee notes that this estimate does not take into account the possible provision of facilities by the host country and voluntary contributions that may be received. A breakdown of this cost estimate is provided in annex I to the Secretary-General's report and supplementary information thereon in annex II. The proposed civilian staffing table of ONUSAL is contained in annex III and its deployment and cost estimate are provided in annex IV.

5. In paragraphs 7 to 11 of his report, the Secretary-General summarizes the operational plan for ONUSAL, including the verification tasks of the human rights component and the operating structure of the Mission. The general assumptions on which the cost estimates are based are contained in paragraphs 12 and 13 of the report. In this connection, the Committee was informed that the draft agreement between the Government of El Salvador and the United Nations on the status of ONUSAL is in the process of being finalized (see para. 14 below).

6. In section IV of his report, the Secretary-General states that to date no voluntary contributions have been received.

7. In section VII of his report, the Secretary-General recalls his conviction that the commencement of the verification of human rights by ONUSAL would promote a significant improvement in the human rights situation in El Salvador, and also would act as a positive impetus to the negotiations. The Secretary-General states that once there is agreement on the cease-fire, it is envisaged that the United Nations will be called upon to play a broader role towards the achievement of peace in the region. The Advisory Committee notes from paragraph 18 of the report that it is the Secretary-General's intention, therefore, to submit to the General Assembly at an appropriate time a revised structure of ONUSAL, subject to the Security Council's approval of the subsequent phases or tasks of the Mission, and the revised resource requirements of an integrated operation.

8. The Advisory Committee undertook a careful and detailed examination of the cost estimates and supplementary information thereon as set out in annexes to the report. The Committee notes from paragraph 13 of annex II of the report that some of the equipment required for ONUSAL may possibly be provided from surplus ONUCA holdings or the ex-UNTAG equipment stockpiled at the United Nations Supply Depot in Pisa at below market cost, taking into account depreciation. The Committee was also informed of several other possibilities, including late phasing in of the Mission, secondment of staff from Member States and other reductions in military and civilian personnel costs, provision of some facilities by the host Government and transfer of vehicles from ONUCA and potential economies in the provision of communications equipment. The Committee is of the view that the above elements and other possible savings may considerably reduce the actual total budgetary requirements of ONUSAL.

9. The Committee inquired about the need to establish three separate offices in San Salvador, namely the Office of the Chief of Mission, the Office of the Director for Human Rights and the Regional Office for the region of San Salvador, as indicated in paragraph 11 of the report. The Committee was informed that the separation of the above offices was required due to the different functions and operational requirements; however, the three offices would be accommodated together in one building.

10. The Committee notes that mission subsistence allowance (MSA) is provided to all participants of ONUSAL at a rate of $63 per day for the first 30 days and thereafter at $60 for San Salvador and $45 elsewhere (annex II, para. 2). Upon inquiry, the Committee was informed that the current ICSC rates are $64 for San Salvador and $22 elsewhere for the first 30 days; thereafter the rates are $48 for San Salvador and $22 elsewhere. The Committee was not fully convinced of the need to grant ONUSAL staff substantially higher rates than for other United Nations staff in El Salvador and believes that there is a potential for savings under subsistence allowance.

11. The Committee is of the view that the estimate for travel (annex II, para. 4), which is based on an average of $4,000 per person for travel to and from the mission area by air, is high, taking into account that 50 per cent of the staff will originate from North America and 25 per cent each from South America and Europe, mostly not requiring an overnight stop-over. The Committee therefore believes that economies can be made under staff travel.

12. With regard to civilian personnel costs for international and local staff, the Committee notes that the salaries and staff costs of 146 international staff are based on New York standard costs for staff in the Professional category and above and General Service categories (annex II, para. 6), which are on average over and above those from other duty stations. The Committee is of the view that the average total remuneration of international staff, including salaries, common staff costs and mission subsistence allowance, for 12 months of about $98,558 per person is high. In this connection, the Committee was informed that less than half of the substantive international staff of ONUSAL would be redeployed from the United Nations system and that about 35 per cent of total international staff, namely human rights officers, would be recruited from outside. Furthermore, it is expected that a number of international staff would be seconded from Member States. Those so recruited or seconded would only be entitled to base salary and/or mission subsistence allowance and would thus not receive other benefits such as post adjustment given to existing United Nations staff deployed from other duty stations. The Committee therefore believes that there is a potential for substantial savings under civilian personnel costs.

13. As regards the planned phasing in of the Mission, the Committee was informed that ONUSAL would now be expected to start at the earliest in late July rather than on 1 July 1991 due to delays in the preparation of the Mission. The Committee notes that the one-month delay in the phasing in of 303 staff in phase I (annex II, para. 11) would result in further savings.

14. As regards the provision of premises and accommodation (annex II, para. 16), the Committee notes that the host Government has not provided office accommodation to ONUCA free of charge and it is therefore expected that ONUSAL would be required to obtain commercial leases for all its premises and accommodation requirements (annex II, para. 11). In this connection, the Committee recalls the model status-of-forces agreement for peace-keeping operations, contained in the report of the Secretary-General (A/45/594), which provides that the host Government should provide without cost to the United Nations peace-keeping operation premises as may be necessary for the conduct of the operation and for the accommodation of the staff. Accordingly, the Advisory Committee trusts that the Secretary-General will pursue every effort with the host country to obtain premises for the operation of the mission and the accommodation of the staff without cost to ONUSAL.

15. With regard to the purchase of vehicles (annex II, para. 17), the Committee is of the view that the provision of 142 vehicles, including 34 sedans and 100 land cruisers, for 146 international staff, 15 military officers and 64 police officers is a high ratio, taking into account that 70 per cent of international staff and 40 per cent of military personnel will be located at the mission headquarters and according to normal practice staff are not travelling alone. Moreover, the Committee was informed that up to 40 vehicles from ONUCA would be made available to ONUSAL at a depreciated price. The Committee notes that in view of the delay in the phasing in of the mission and the longer lead-time, the estimated costs for the lease of vehicle should decrease if the purchased vehicles were available earlier. The Committee therefore believes that significant economies can be realized in the estimate for the purchase and lease of vehicles.

16. With regard to the estimates for communications equipment (annex II, para. 18), the Committee was informed by representatives of the Secretary-General that the unit price of one stand alone PC network for data communications with radio repeaters and modem was overstated in the report and should be reduced from $100,000 to $72,000; similarly, the number of "Solar systems" should be reduced from 40 to 24, or from $46,000 to $27,600. The estimate for freight is consequently reduced by $4,000 leading to a total reduction of $50,400. The total corrected estimate is thus $2,064,000. The Committee was not convinced of the need for both a transportable earth station ($890,000) and an Inmarsat terminal ($45,000) since these are normally alternative types of equipment.

17. With regard to public information (annex II, para. 20 (c) and (i)), the Committee notes from paragraph 9 of the report that the Mission is to "initiate an information campaign to inform the public about the capabilities and limitations of the Mission under the Agreement". The Committee trusts that efforts will be made through the local media in particular to achieve these aims.

18. In view of the Committee's observations in paragraphs 8 to 17 above and taking into account the possible provision of premises by the host country and voluntary contributions by Governments and other savings, the Advisory Committee believes that the total amount of $23 million gross should prove

sufficient for ONUSAL for the period from 1 July 1991 to 30 June 1992. On that basis, the Advisory Committee recommends that the General Assembly appropriate and assess a total of $13.8 million gross ($13.0 million net) for the period from 1 July to 31 December 1991. In addition, the General Assembly may wish to authorize the Secretary-General, with the prior concurrence of the Advisory Committee, to enter into commitments not exceeding $9.2 million gross ($8.8 million net) for the remaining six-month period of ONUSAL from 1 January to 30 June 1992.